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643 chiefs of the southern settlements follow their
669 representative and the issue is fought out. It would seem probable that when there is disagreement it is an expression not of divergence of opinion about the merits of the candidates but of local loyalties in which different members of the royal house are associated with different parts of Shilluk-land. Whether disputed succession in the past was a product of local rivalries cannot perhaps now be determined, but it seems likely in view of the fact that in earlier times the king ruled from the settlement in which he was brought up or moved from one settlement to another and did not have a fixed residence at the central and neutral point of Fashoda.[1] I would also suggest that the association of princes with settlements and districts is clearly related to the custom by which they are brought up away from the capital. It is probable that the backing given by north and south to candidates for the kingship in past times arose from the fact that some princes were brought up in the north and some in the south. That this is the case is clear
[114] from Father Hofmayr's detailed notes on each of

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[1] Seligman, *Report of the Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratories*, p. 229, citing information given by Father Banholzer and Dr Lambie; Westermann, *op. cit.* p. 138; Hofmayr, *op. cit.* p. 76.

the Shilluk kings.[1] It is easy to determine because the shrines of dead kings are still maintained to-day where they were born and brought up. I would further suggest that the maternal descent of princes may be of great significance in that it may be the association of maternal lineages with settlements which attaches local loyalties to a particular prince or to a particular branch of the royal house. It is therefore important that the maternal clans of the Shilluk kings should be recorded by some future observer.

The Shilluk statement that kings should be put to death if they grow old or become sick and their further statement that any prince may at any time challenge the king to mortal combat, in which the king may not call for help, cannot, I think, like the mode of succession, be understood except in relation to the political structure as a whole. There is only traditional evidence that any king has ever been killed in either way but, as Mr Howell and Mr Thomson point out,[2] the belief that kings have been, or might be, so killed has political implications. The assertion that a sick or old king should be killed probably means that when some disaster falls upon the Shilluk nation the tensions inherent

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 59–136. [2] *Op. cit.* p. 11.

2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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or commoners, and even close relatives, including half-brothers by the same father, though connection with a full brother or a uterine half-brother would not be permitted. Royal daughters are treated with great respect, may exercise considerable influence in district affairs, and when elderly may help and advise the local chief, but they never become guardians of shrines as do the king's wives and widows.

We did not hear of the rivalry between princes leading to actual warfare for the throne, though considering how commonly the Shilluk quarrel among themselves this seemed probable, and some of the old traditional quarrels between North and South may have originated in such rivalry. It is related that Nyakwac killed the surviving children of his great uncle Nyadwai (the twelfth king), though three of them had already reigned before him, but we do not think this was a common practice.

The children of the king are called *nyireth*; his grandchildren are *nyinyireth*, and his great grandchildren are *kwanyireth*; their children again may be called *kwanyireth*. The four generations are regarded as of royal blood in descending degrees, and even *kwanyireth* follow the royal practice of retaining their lower central incisors instead of having them knocked out as commoners do, but the children of *kwanyireth* are treated as commoners. The descendants of the king form a privileged group; both sons, grandsons, and their children are called *kwareth*. The title *kwanyireth dwong* (great *kwanyireth*) is given to the first generation of *kwanyireth* or to a *kwanyireth* who has become a chief.

Apart from the king and the royal family, but having the closest ceremonial connection with the former, are the *orore*,[1] who trace their origin to the fifth Shilluk king, Ocalo. They play a prominent part

[1] Rightly qualified by Mr. Munro as a "class . . . full of mystery" in his "Installation of the Reet of the Choi (King of the Shilluks)", which we reprint in an appendix. They certainly require further study. Nyikwayo states that royal descendants become *orore* after a special degradation ceremony which has to be carried out by stealth. His account is far from clear, but officially he agrees that the only *orore* are the descendants of Ocalo (op. cit., pp. 160–2). Mr. Hussey confirms this, and in answer to our questions obtained the following account of the origin of the *orore*. During the reign of king Ocalo there was trouble between the Nuer and Shilluk. The sons of Ocalo, who led the Shilluk against the Nuer, were all killed except Dowad, considered very insignificant by the king, who felt that there would be no chance of one of his offspring reigning since all his important sons had been killed. In a rage Ocalo took the sacred spears of Nyakang and threw them in the river, but Dowad succeeded in rescuing the last and demanded of his father why he did this. When Ocalo answered that his sons were dead, a quarrel ensued between father and son, leading Dowad to say that the sacrifices to his father should not be killed with a spear and to threaten to degrade his father's descendants. When Dowad became king his half-brothers were degraded to the level of commoners, with the name Nyagal instead of their previous appellation Kayo. As compensation they were granted an important part in the installation and funerary rites of the king, as well as in certain religious ceremonies at Fashoda.

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It would appear, therefore, that in judicial and administrative matters the Shilluk *reth* is far from being an over-riding or autocratic political authority. Local chiefs seem to be free to follow their own traditional courses without much interference. In actual powers of government and administration, and in personal prerogative, the *reth* may be little more than a mediator in disputes and perhaps the balancing force which decides a quarrel one way or another. It is in ritual matters that his real position and powers are indicated.

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THE RITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RETH

Evans-Pritchard writes: "Both his functions and his status are primarily of a ritual order. He makes sacrifices on important occasions, especially for rain and for victory in war, and it is his duty to provide cattle for the sacred herds of Nyikang at Nyilual and Wau and a cance for Nyikang's shrine at Nyibodho.(1)

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It is noticeable that everywhere there is the closest connection between the political structure and the religious cult.

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(a) The territorial segments and their association with certain dominant lineages are explained in terms of the myth of Nyikang's division of the country among his followers who became the founding ancestors of many of the Shilluk clans.

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(b) The lineage heads who are chiefs of settlements have ritual duties to the kingship. They perform ceremonial services at the time of the *reth*'s investiture, are responsible for building huts in Fashoda and for the upkeep of Nyikang's shrines and those of past *reths*. The tombs of the dead kings are indistinguishable from the shrines of Nyikang and have the same ceremonial importance in rain-making ceremonies, harvest rituals and so forth.

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(c) The traditional customs of the people and the organization of society in every way are considered to be the work of Nyikang directly or acting in the line of *reths*.

(d) The identification of Nyikang with the king is the central point of the Shilluk political, ritual and moral system. The people believe that Nyikang reigns and manifests himself in the *reth*. Nyikang is also the medium between the Shilluk and Juok - their chief spirit. The Shilluk consider the *reth* to be in close communication with the mystic forces of life, and Nyikang is the connecting link, participating in Juok as he does in the *reth*.(2)

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The *reth* is considered to come under the category of Divine kings, as described by Frazer in *The Golden Bough*. This is clear from the rule of his death and succession as well as from the duties he performs during his lifetime.

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Succession of the Reth

Only the son of a *reth* who has reigned is eligible, and a *nyireth* may

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk*, 1948, pp.16-17.
(2) *Ibid.*, p.19.

attempt to usurp the throne any time after killing the *reth*. The *reth*'s sons and the sons of previous *reths* are potential rivals and are not allowed within Fashoda at night. The *reth* takes precautions to avoid this danger. It is not known in which hut he sleeps and he is said to wander round at night looking for intruders. This practice of regicide no doubt accounts for the planting out of the *reth*'s sons from the time of their birth.

The Death of a Reth

The *reth* is considered to have some mystic connection with the world of nature, and the state of his health has an effect on the fertility of the land, on the rains, the harvests and on the general material and spiritual welfare of the people. If the *reth* becomes weak, the people suffer and he must be killed. If he were allowed to die naturally the spirit of Nyikang might be lost to the Shilluk for ever. There are a number of traditions relating to the traditional mode of death suffered by the *reth*. One maintains that the *reth* is strangled or suffocated by his wives if he shows signs of senility; another that he was walled up alive in a hut. The *reth* may be killed by a rival claimant to the throne at any time. Evans-Pritchard considers that the ceremonial putting to death of kings is probably a fiction; there is no historical evidence for it and some Shilluk kings seem to have reigned until they were quite old. Both Howell and Evans-Pritchard consider that there is a close connection between the tradition of killing the king, because of the bad effects of his waning vitality, and the tradition that a rival claimant should seize the throne ".... we must interpret Shilluk statements about the matter as indicating not that any prince may slay the king on his own initiative, as has been suggested, but that any prince may lead a rebellion as the candidate of discontent, particularly of the part of the kingdom to which the prince belongs. If the king has lost support in the part to which he belongs he will probably lose also both the resulting contest and his life in it."(1) If this is so, the traditions of king-killing are perhaps an interpretation, couched in symbolic terms, of the actual course of events following a rebellion against the *reth*.

ELECTION AND INSTALLATION OF THE RETH

Detailed descriptions of the installation of a new *reth* have been given - apart from information by Nornol - by Howell and Thomson who were in Shilluk land at the election of King Fafiti Yor in 1943 and of his successor, King Anei in 1944. In the events described by them the political, ritual and symbolic nature of the *reth* and the importance of the Nyikang myths may be clearly seen. In addition, the relationships between the various social divisions and between the territorial and kinship segments may be perceived in action. The whole tribe participates in some degree, for a series of ceremonies is carried out by the clans, in which each has a special traditional role to play.

The interregnum is a period of danger, owing to the war which may break out over the choice of a successor and owing to the absence of the

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk*, 1948, pp.34-5.

symbol of unity and cohesion. The main events are as follows:- 643

The funeral of the dead *reth* is carried out and is followed, a year later, by mortuary ceremonies and funeral dances. These events are chiefly a family affair and are organised by the *ororo* and the *kwareth*.

The election of the *reth* concerns the whole of the Shilluk people who are represented by the chiefs of the North and South Provinces. The *reth* is chosen from among the *nyireth* by an electoral college, composed of the descendants of the men who were, traditionally, made chiefs of the first degree by Nyikang when he parcelled out the country between eleven of his followers.(1) Three representatives from the *kwareth* are also included, but the *ororo* and *bung reth* have no representatives and take no part in the election although they are important in the ceremonies of installation. 643 666

Just as Shillukland is divided into two territorial divisions, Ler and Luak, so for ritual purposes this structure is represented in special ritual terms. The Northern province becomes *Gol Dhiang*, the Southern province becomes *Gol Nyikang*. There is a rough correspondence between the two political and the two ritual divisions. The chiefs of the ritual divisions are the political chiefs of Golbany and Kwom, the two settlements just north and south of Fashoda. 182 631

The election of a particular *reth* must have the backing of the whole country, although at first sight it may appear that the choice lies with the chiefs of Gol Dhiang and Gol Nyikang. The election cannot take place unless they agree and this does not involve their own personal opinions solely. The other chiefs all take part and represent the views of each section of the country and if there is disagreement between the two provinces civil war may follow. Agreement is usually reached before the electoral college sits and formally proposes and elects the new *reth*. During the interval between the death of a *reth* and the election of his successor custom requires that all potential claimants should stay in their villages. This is the chance to seize the *reth*ship by force, if a candidate wishes to do so and has the necessary backing. Co-operation between the candidate and his settlement chief is essential for only the latter has the necessary force and only a *reth*'s son is eligible for the *reth*ship. Other chiefs join the rebels and fighting will begin. Until one side is defeated, or the *nyireth* is killed there will be civil war. 631 643 666 643 669

The Installation Ceremonies

Skins, ostrich feathers and the various trappings for the pageantry of the ceremonies are provided traditionally by certain clans and settlements. The principal shrine of Nyikang is at Akurwa, where he is believed to have disappeared in a storm. At his shrine are kept effigies of Nyikang and his son Dak. Into these effigies the spirits of Nyikang and Dak may enter at any time. On the death of a *reth* new images are made, for it is believed that Nyikang's spirit, formerly in the *reth*, transfers itself to the new effigy and remains there during the inter-regnum. At the installation 643 778

(1) Howell and Thomson, *S.N.R.*, 1946, Vol.XXVII, p.29.

643 778 of the newly elected *reth* Nyikang and Dak are brought in procession from Akurwa to Fashoda with their priests to test the new *reth*.

182 631 643 541 The conventional opposition between northern and southern divisions now becomes apparent. The forces of the southern province flock to support the *reth*-elect and wait at Debalo settlement while Nyikang and his supporters assemble at Adodo. The two armies then march to Khor Arepajur and a mock battle takes place with millet stalks instead of spears. Nyikang captures the *reth*-elect and there is a procession to the shrine of Nyikang at Fashoda. Certain ceremonies of a mystic nature follow, which are not participated in by the whole people, as are the procession and battle. The image of Nyikang is placed on the royal stool, then the king-elect sits on it and the spirit of Nyikang is believed to enter into him, and possess him causing him to tremble.

A few days later a second mock battle occurs between the king's supporters and Nyikang. The *reth* is victorious, for Nyikang has taken possession of him and the effigy is now merely the symbol of Nyikang and no longer the repository of his spirit. . In a final ceremony all the important chiefs and elders from all parts of Shillukland declare their allegiance to the new *reth*.

182 643 The installation ceremonies of the *reth* and the traditions relating to Nyikang show how, at every point, the structure and political organisation of the Shilluk people is confirmed by ritual and by mystic symbols.

643 69 All rebellions and revolts are directed against the king in person and not against the kingship itself. The unity of the Shilluk is such that the various segments of the country can be represented by the common symbol of the *reth*-ship. Nevertheless, there are powerful tendencies towards fission within the structure. As has been shown, the kingship is the subject of competition on the part of the *nyireth* candidates supported by chiefs and forces available from their territories.

171 Of all the Nilotic groups for which there is any considerable information, the Shilluk alone form a single political unit, or nation, as opposed to a number of separate tribes or tribal groups which are culturally similar but not politically unified. At the same time, the principles of their political structure and social organisation are similar in many respects to those of the rest of the Nilotes, in particular the Anuak.

AGE SETS

114 Apart from a brief mention by Hofmayr, the only information concerning the Shilluk age sets is contained in Howell's article in *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1941, Vol.XXIV.

54 887 On reaching puberty a Shilluk boy is initiated into the age-set organisation. A Shilluk age set is known as *ric* and is made up of three or more subdivisions each consisting of men of approximately the same age, who have herded cattle together as boys. A man always remains in the subdivision into which he has been initiated, but a periodical shuffling of the subdivisions alters their respective positions in an age set and the whole age-set organisation. A reorganisation of the groups of subdivisions

9:Howell E-5 (1937-1950) 1952 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

is in accordance with Shilluk tradition, but the kings prior to this period appear to have had a stability of tenure unknown during the latter half of the nineteenth century.[1] The opposition sprang from resentment of an excessive and often oppressive use of the powers accorded to him and also from a reaction to the interference of an alien government, for many of the *reths* of that period were no more than puppets.

reth Kwathker, who was the *reth* of the Shilluk at the time of the first arrival of the Turkish 'Mudir' at Fashoda, was deposed and replaced by a nominee called Ajang Nyidhok, who was never accepted by the southern Shilluk.[2] A civil war between the north and the Government on one side supporting Ajang, and the south supporting Kwathker followed. The south was defeated, and Kwathker died in chains at Fashoda.[3] Ajang was himself deposed shortly afterwards and the Turks attempted to administer the Shilluk without a *reth* at all. This policy was, however, entirely unsuccessful and, after a clash which resulted in a massacre of Government troops at Kaka in 1875, Kweikon, son of Kwathker, was installed as *reth*. A few years later Kweikon joined the Turkish troops in their attack on the forces of the Mahdi at Jebel Gadir. The Turkish and Shilluk forces were annihilated and Kweikon was killed. Subsequently, after a period of interregnum, Yor, son of *reth* Akoc, who had visited the Mahdi and received his support, installed himself at Fashoda. The support of the *Mahdia*, however, did not continue under the régime of the Khalifa Abdullahi, and Yor was finally captured and beheaded by the Emir Zeki Tumal near Tonga. His successor was Kur, another son of *reth* Nyidhok, who was a Mahdist puppet and called by them Abdel Fadil. During Kur's absence in Omdurman, Akol, a son of Kwathker, supported by the southern Shilluk attempted a *coup d'état*, but was unsuccessful owing to the intervention of the northern Shilluk. The present Government arrived in 1898, and Kur remained in power until 1903, when he was deposed for 'unjust and oppressive' actions against his people. He was replaced by Fadiet, a Government nominee, who died in 1917. After a show of opposition by the southern Shilluk, who supported Coti, son of *reth* Ajang, Fafiti, son of Yor, was finally installed at Fashoda in 1917 and ruled until 1943. He was followed in quick succession by Anei wad Kur, who died less than two years after his installation, and Dak wad Fadiet, who died in 1951. The present *reth*-elect, not yet formally installed, is Kur wad Fafiti.

Throughout this period, administration was carried out through the agency of the *reth*, although there were frequent attempts to increase the authority of local chiefs, formed into Chiefs' Courts. It may be noted also that there were occasional attempts to oust Fafiti in favour of rivals, the most notable of whom was Nyawelo wad Kur who was exiled in 1932. These attempts were, however, severely suppressed by the Government and it is impossible even to guess whether they would have been successful, if the reigning *reth* had not enjoyed an artificial stability of tenure provided by the Government. During this period the policy of the Government was to establish tribunals throughout the country from which final appeal lay to the *reth* himself. The extent of the jurisdiction of these tribunals has varied considerably from time to time, the boundaries being altered, for administrative convenience, to approximate to the

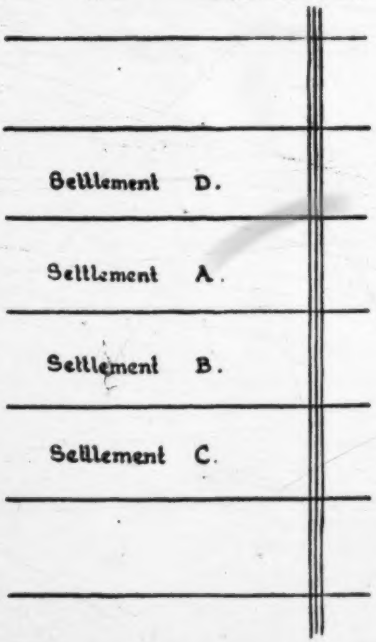
[1] See Hofmayr, *Die Schilluk*, 1925, and also Westermann, *The Shilluk People*, 1912, on traditions about the early *reths*.

[2] Howell and Thomson, op. cit., p. 75, i.e. those living in Lusk. The division into Lusk and Gerr has had not only ritual but political significance.

[3] Kodok—Turkish Province Headquarters and called by them Fashoda. Fashoda is in fact the capital of the *reth* and lies some fifteen miles south of Kodok.

9:Howell E-5 (1937-1950) 1952 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

Other examples are recorded in the Shilluk District records.[1] Another important factor is the nature of Shilluk territorial organization. Settlements can, in a sense, actively continue a feud only with their immediate neighbours on either side. Thus, if a man of settlement *A* (see fig.) kills a man of settlement *B*, this may be the beginning of a feud which, though sometimes dormant, frequently breaks out again, because both sides are easily mobilized against each other; also it may lead to serious clashes in which the casualties may be considerable. At the same time, the sanctions for peaceful composition are comparatively greater. A feud between settlement *A* and settlement *C*, and even more between settlements *D* and *C*, is less easily sustained, though the sanctions for peaceful composition are comparatively less effective owing to territorial distance. Moreover, owing to kinship links which stretch across the boundaries of the settlements, there may be a tendency for intervening settlements to oppose further strife, or sometimes, on the other hand, to take sides in the affray, in which case internal warfare on a much wider scale may result. Demographic factors are here important and more easily discernible owing to the peculiar nature of Shilluk country and the way in which it is segmented in a continuous line from north to south, the boundaries being more or less at right angles to the Nile.



This form of sustained blood-feud between settlements in Shilluk society[2] is characteristic and endemic, and there are many instances both during the régime of the present Government and also during the previous Turkish administration, of which no official records are extant, but concerning which references may be found in the literature of early European travellers. Other forms of internal strife are either on a greater scale—widespread clashes often connected with subversive movements against the ruling *reth*—or minor hostilities within a settlement which concern the component lineages; from the evidence available, these appear to have been less prolonged than feuds between settlements. The first type of hostilities cannot really be

[1] The authorities were much exercised over the problem of feuds and homicide—at any rate up to 1935—and the incidence of homicide was until then very high indeed.

[2] I do not here attempt to correlate the Shilluk 'settlement' with similar segments in Nuer and Dinka society. If one called the four main provinces 'primary segments', the divisions (*lak*) would be 'secondary segments' and settlements would be 'tertiary segments' as described among the Nuer. The use of similar terms, however, presupposes a similarity of structure which does not exist, for segmentation among the Nuer is based on the analogy of a lineage, but this is not so among the Shilluk. Furthermore, can the Shilluk 'nation' (sometimes called tribe) be compared directly to a Nuer 'tribe'? Similar difficulties arise when we attempt to compare political or social units among the Dinka, although

9:Howell E-5 (1937-1950) 1952 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

described as feuds, for they amount to civil war; the latter are usually so quickly composed that the feud is soon over. The ultimate aim of the first is successful deposition of the monarch by one side or his retention by the other, and there is evidence of a traditional, almost institutionalized, opposition between the north and south.[1] In the latter form of hostilities the desire for peaceful composition after an outbreak of violence or an act of homicide was presumably fostered by expediency, for within so compact and densely populated a territorial unit the continuance of a feud would be intolerable.[2] Local lineages within a settlement are sufficiently united by common interests in economic activities, by marital ties, and above all in common defence against aggression from other settlements, that these sanctions were, and indeed still are, particularly effective. These distinctions are important, for not only are feuds between adjacent settlements often fiercely sustained, as we have seen, but it is at this level of internal disruption that the intervention of the *reth* is most obvious, if we are to accept the evidence of recorded instances. This is true whether we take the view that in the past, before Government influences were effective, the king's intervention took the form of arbitration demanded by the participants, or whether we take the opposite view that he took repressive or even legal action as the head of an organized State.

In the case of civil war over the tenure of the monarchy itself, the *reth* was the leading participant defending his personal position against a rival. Action against him was *ultra vires*, though this was no longer true as soon as his rival was established on the throne. In the case of hostilities within a settlement, the sanctions were probably sufficiently forceful to secure amicable composition without either external arbitration or repression. We must, therefore, consider homicide in the context of inter-settlement feuds in which, as we shall see, the *reth* was more particularly involved in the rôle of peacemaker. It will then be necessary to consider the more individual aspects of the laws of homicide.

The Reth*'s Rôle in the Composition of Inter-settlement Feuds*

On this subject the Seligmans say:

> As the fountain of justice, the king kept for himself by far the greater part of the fines for homicide and other grave offences. The fine for man-killing was usually ten head of cattle, but sometimes more was levied; a girl might be taken in lieu of the cattle, when the king would allow the girl to marry, but would keep the bridewealth; or a girl and a boy might be kept as hostages by the king until the cattle were paid. The king might give one head of cattle to the family of the deceased as compensation; this, however, did not always settle the matter, and a blood feud might start and be continued until the balance of dead was even, often not only families but whole villages becoming involved.[3]

the Nyork Dinka at any rate are in this respect closer to the Shilluk than to the Nuer.

[1] See Evans-Pritchard, op. cit., p. 29.

[2] Latent hostility between kinship groups *within* a settlement sometimes prevailed. I recently drove with the *jago* of Ogod *Par* from his home in the extreme south of that settlement to his northern boundaries. He insisted that I should drive him back, presumably because he preferred the comfort of a motor-car to his own feet, but he gave as a reason that his people were at feud with the *Awa* Oman lineage lying just to the north of his own village (an act of homicide had occurred two years before). It may be noted, however, that the villages of these *Awa* Oman are set in Ogod *Bata* which is, in a sense, a separate settlement territorially but not politically within the boundaries of Ogod *Par*. It is doubtful whether a feud between these people would be long sustained.

[3] *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, p. 46. The authors make no reference to the evidence from which these deductions were made. It must be remembered that Seligman supported the view that the king had absolute power. 'In the old days his word was law....' *The Cult of Nyakang and the Divine Kings of the Shilluk*, Welcome Report, 1911.

17: Pumphrey G-5 (1934-1938) 1941
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remnant, *derimo olang*[5]. These blacks in time also became *Collo* and the clan of Nyikang, originally the *Collo* par excellence, became known as *Kwar Reth*[6] in distinction from the remainder. 173

Shortly after his defeat at the battle of Wau, Nyikang had disappeared in a whirl-wind and his son Dak succeeded him as *Reth*. Dak was a great warrior and after expelling the *Fun*[7] raided the country as far north as the latitude of El Dueim. In this he met little opposition. The main powers then existing were the kingdom of Tegale to the west and that of the Fung to the east, and the Shilluk seemed to have dominated the White Nile until about 1800. The northern boundary of the Shilluk country was, however, fixed by Dak at the site of the village of Tworokit (opposite Jebel Ahmed Agha), the country beyond being considered (as it is to this day described) as "raiding country."[8]

The period from Dak's campaigns to the arrival of the Arab slave trader El Fiki Mohammed Kheir in the reign of *Reth* Kwadhker (approximately 1850) is obscure. There are accounts of fighting with the Anuak; the Dinka appear to have arrived from the south-west in the reign of *Reth* Tugo (about 1750) and the Nuer to have reached Zeraf Island a little later. When the first Mudir of Fashoda[4] took up his position at Kodok in 1867 *Reth* Kwadhker was reigning and the distribution of neighbouring tribes was approximately as it is to-day. 175

Sir Samuel Baker describes how he caught this Mudir in the scandalous act of arresting Shilluk for non-payment of taxes (a proceeding not unknown to-day) and also how he interviewed the ex-*Reth* Kwadhker who had by then been deposed by the Mudir in favour of the Turkish puppet Ajang Nyidhok. At this period there was serious civil war between the northern half of the kingdom, supporting the usurper Ajang and the Government, and the southern half, supporting the deposed Kwadhker. Finally after Kwadhker had for many years 175 648 649

5. This may be translated "black battalions."

6. *Kwar* is a collective word meaning "descendants." Thus *Kwar Omun* means the descendants of Omun and *Kwar Reth* means the descendants of the (original) *Reth*, that is Nyikang.

7. "*pulu manyo*."

8. Ali Bey Kurdi.

17: Pumphrey G-5 (1934-1938) 1941
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eluded capture the Mudir lured him into his encampment at Lul and took him to Kodok where he ultimately died a prisoner.

Reth Ajang fell from favour over suspected complicity in the killing of some government troops engaged in an attempt to collect rifles from the tribe, and was hanged at Kodok. Thereafter the Mudir, Yusef Bey, decided to govern the tribe without a *Reth* and local chiefs were accordingly appointed throughout the country. This policy was evidently unsuccessful and in October 1875 Romolo Gessi, who happened to be passing in a steamer, heard from the Mudir that the garrison at Kaka, which consisted then of some 24 soldiers with one cannon, was being besieged by the tribe. He consented to take a relief party there. This party, 140 strong, landed at Kaka and was ambushed and killed almost to a man, Gessi being a spectator from the steamer.

This event caused the recall of Ali Bey Kurdi to Fashoda. He hanged many of the recently appointed chiefs and appointed as *Reth* Kwiekon a son of Kwadhker. Rashid Bey relieved Ali Bey Kurdi in about 1880.

In 1881 the Mahdi moved to Jebel Gadir. Rashid Bey, apparently on his own initiative, took a force variously estimated from 400 to 1400 strong which included *Reth* Kwiekon and marched by an inland route to Jebel Gadir in the hope of capturing the Mahdi. Almost the entire force was killed, including the Mudir and Kwiekon.

Kodok then became one of the marooned garrisons. A certain Jok Akoc[a] succeeded Kwiekon, but neither he nor the remaining vestiges of Government had much control over the tribe. Yor Akoc (father of the present *Reth* Fafiti and brother of Jok) went to El Obeid to pay respects to the Mahdi and got himself appointed *Reth*. Later, when the garrison left Kodok, Yor installed himself at Fashoda.

However the tribe was not to be left long in peace. During the famine in Omdurman the Emir Abbas Sami came in the S.S. *Safia* with a large body of Ta'aisha to feed off the country. *Reth* Yor did not co-operate in this scheme to the Emir's satisfaction and the following year Zeki Tummal, who had been campaigning in Abyssinia, was

[a] Jok was never officially *Reth* and was superseded by his brother Yor almost at once.

17: Pumphrey G-5 (1934-1938) 1941
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ordered to punish this recalcitrance. This he did with some effect. He set up a well-defended encampment at Fadiang (about six miles south of Kodok) and thence made repeated raids on the tribe. The Shilluk fled across the river and the Emir laid waste the whole country, succeeding finally in arresting *Reth* Yor whom he had beheaded at Fadiang. 175 648

Kur Nyidhok, a brother of the puppet King Ajang, had joined the forces of Zeki Tummal and when the latter left for Omdurman he took Kur to pay homage to the Khalifa Abdullahi. No sooner had Kur gone than Akol, another of Kwadhker sons, arose as a pretender in the south, and was barely prevented from effecting his entry into Fashoda by the defeat of his supporters at the hands of a force comprising all the sections from Burbok to Both at the battle of Kwom. This attempt was punished by Kur on his return from Omdurman at the battle of Dettim where Akol's supporters were defeated and Akol himself forced to retire to Abujop on the Sobat. Kur was *Reth* at the time of Marchand's arrival at Kodok, but was deposed by the present Government in 1903 and replaced by Akol's brother Fadiet. Fadiet was probably done to death in the traditional manner, by being suffocated by some of his wives, and Fafiti, son of Yor Akoc, was appointed. It is said that in this election the Mamur of Kodok was partial and that he contrived the appointment against the wishes of the tribe. This, if in any way true, has been much exaggerated. There was normal rivalry between Coti, son of Ajang, and Fafiti. Ajang had been a puppet of the Turkish Government and, having never been ceremonially installed in Fashoda, had never really been *Reth*. Coti's claim was therefore poor. Fafiti was supported by Bol Ayuel, Chief of Golbañ, and Coti by Ajang Agwet, Chief of Debalo. The Chiefs of Golbañ and Debalo are *ex officio* primarily responsible for electing the new *Reth* and as these two functionaries differed feeling was naturally high. The southern half of the country were antagonised by Fafiti's appointment and their allegiance to him accordingly remains to this day less sincere.

In 1932, largely owing to famine, Fafiti's prestige sank low and Coti's cousin, Nyaweilo Kur, conspired to kill him. The arrest and exile of Nyaweilo improved Fafiti's position and his prestige has probably grown in the last nine years. [669]

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944)1946
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ritual acts, involuntarily by reason of his very existence, the *reth* affects the fortunes and fertility of the tribe and controls the natural phenomena which react upon crops and cattle. The *reth* is therefore the central figure of tribal religion as much as he is the actual symbol of political unity. He is responsible for their welfare and fortunes both spiritually as the present manifestation of Nyikang and temporally as the leading tribal authority. No Shilluk would seriously dispute the *reth's* divine attributes (unless a follower of some alien religion) though some might resist his more mundane powers.

The genealogy of the royal house of the Shilluk goes back for fourteen generations, but Fafiti Yor, who ruled the Shilluk since 1917, was the 29th *reth* because in many cases the succession has passed to brothers of the same generation or even back a generation to an uncle. This is clear from the genealogy recorded by Hoffmeyer and adopted by Seligman and Pumphrey. (*Vide* Appendix IV).

The main factors governing the succession of Shilluk *reths* are these:

1. That only the son of a *reth* who has ruled the Shilluk is eligible. More distant relatives have no claim. The son of a *reth* is entitled *nyireth* in Shilluk.

2. That it is recognized that a *nyireth* may at any time attempt to usurp the throne after killing the *reth*.

3. For this reason the *reth's* sons or sons of previous *reths* are always potentially in opposition to the ruling *reth*, and they are not allowed within the confines of Fashoda at night. Theoretically at any rate, the *reth* must take every precaution to avoid this danger. For example it is never known in which of the many huts he sleeps at night; he is said to move from one to another, and prowls round Fashoda at night if he suspects a marauder. The new *reth* Anei showed us some spears with a special black finish, which he had imported from Dinka country, and

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944)1946
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1. Since the well-being of the Shilluk tribe depends so necessarily on the very existence of the *reth* and every action he takes, the death of a *reth* and the installation of a successor must be most carefully regulated by ritual and religious observances. 643

2. The occasion demands strict observance of all the rites and ceremonies necessary to carry the tribe no less than their figure-head from one status to another A false step will cause disaster to the tribe

3. The period of the interregnum is one of intense danger for the Shilluk tribe. Spiritually it is dangerous, because there is no human symbol of tribal cohesion. The *reth* is "out of status"; the whole tribe is in a like position The soul of Nyikang is without a home. The newly appointed *reth* will later incarnate the spirit of Nyikang, but he does not yet possess fully the divine attributes which have the effect among his people of stabilizing his position To the Shilluk the political situation also is full of potential danger because civil war may break out at any moment over the choice of a successor Even after the new *reth* has been appointed by the traditional college of chiefs, his life is endangered and every effort must be made to safeguard him [775] [669]

4. Therefore each stage in the burial and installation ceremonies successfully concluded is yet another crisis passed. Emotional tension is manifest throughout—a rise and fall of political and religious feeling until the final climax is reached when the new *reth* is confirmed in his position by the homage of the temporal heads of the country Although the Sudan Government did not intervene either in the choice of the new *reth* or in the form or timing of the events, the Shilluk knew well enough that no blood-shed would be tolerated. How much greater then must [781] [648]

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
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643 766 of the new *reth* would follow still later. It was thought that the time of the early maturing grain was the time to hold it. But the *reth* elect and responsible advisers seemed to think it should be got over quickly; maybe the general quickening tempo of life had something to do with it. It may, and we think this more likely, be due to a desire to get all the ceremonial over without undue delay. For the *reth* had been elected without a fight, and the Shilluk were so pleased that he had been chosen without violence, or the taint of being a government nominee, that they wanted the period of uncertainty cut down as far as possible.

The attendance at the funeral dance was said to be a reflexion on the prestige and the popularity of the late *reth*. This would be an interesting gauge, for the last time, of the esteem in which Fafiti had been held by his people to the end. His prestige had gone through 643 various vicissitudes. He had from the beginning suffered from being a government nominee, and the opposition of the southern Shilluk [668] to his appointment, muted by government action, prevented his obtaining a willing and personal ascendancy over them for many years. As soon as his authority was complete, there followed a period of famine in the early 30's and the attempt by Nyawelo the son of [669] *reth* Kur to assassinate him. This attempt would probably have been successful but for government intervention.

Again in 1936, Fafiti became ill, and the future for the Shilluk was once more clouded. He recovered however, and during his last years his influence throughout the Shilluk country was great, and he was held in high esteem by all his subjects.

766 Near the time of the funeral wake, the Shilluk chiefs and with their men began to collect bulls for driving to Golbainy to be slaughtered for the dance. There was no compulsion on anyone to do this, but [626] public opinion required that those who could, should help according to their means. On the whole the pressure of public opinion was more insistent upon those who lived near than upon those who lived farther away.

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
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643 elect a *reth* without help from government, but in the event no difficulties arose.

643 666 Within a week of the passing of the *reth* the members of the electoral college had met at Fashoda, and many other influential chiefs and notables had gathered there as well. An unanimous choice of Anei son of Kur, the favourite of Fafiti, was made, and there seemed to be little discussion and no opposition from outside the electoral college.[11]

631 643 666 Several interesting points in connexion with the actual election procedure were noticeable. The electors divided into three groups, Gol Nyikang (southern Shilluk) under the chief of Kwom, Gol Dhiang (northern Shilluk) under the chief of Golbainy, and the Kwareth under the chief of Fadhiang. Agreement was first reached between the chief of Kwum and the chief of Golbainy upon Anei as *reth*, and when this agreement was announced to the other electors they seem to have agreed to it without much further discussion. This is an interesting [156] fact, and one which is not in accord with normal Shilluk practice, where a man with decided opinions upon anything is seldom overawed by time or place in expressing them. The Colo chiefs seem to have lined up behind their respective leaders, the chiefs of Gol Nyikang and Gol Dhiang, and as the choice lay in the first place with Colo, the chief of Fadhiang, on behalf of the Kwareth, had nothing to add.

It was explained to us that the whole thing hinged upon agreement of the chief of Gol Nyikang and the chief of Gol Dhiang. Had they disagreed, their respective chiefs would have ranged themselves in opposing camps. What the Kwareth would have done is difficult to say. They said they would have followed the chief of Gol Dhiang, maybe because Fadhiang is part of Gol Dhiang but many, if not most Kwareth live in Gol Nyikang. On several past occasions when a 631 643 666 *reth* has been elected there has been disagreement between Gol Nyikang and Gol Dhiang, presumably because the two chiefs failed to reach agreement. It was the disagreement between these two ● 669 which pro[illegible]d civil war between the two halves of the country, or

11. The "canvassing" of one of the sons of *reth* Fadiet never amounted to opposition.

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944)1946
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government intervention in the past. As several of the electors said, "if there had not been agreement between the chiefs of Gol Dhiang and Gol Nyikang, we should have gone home, each behind our leader" —presumably to prepare for war.

At the meetings of the electoral college etiquette was very strict, and as far as we could make out, the order, in theory, was that the chief of Gol Nyikang proposes a candidate to the chief of Gol Dhiang; no doubt this is in fact discussed privately by the two chiefs. The chief of Gol Dhiang replies agreeing to the proposal (or not, as the case may be). In fact there is not much more for the other members to say, though they doubtless know before hand, and may even have some say in who is to be the candidate proposed by their chief. Should any chief or notable, outside the electoral college, be sitting at their meeting, as did in fact happen, he would be very careful not to do more than listen. He would feel it quite out of place to express an opinion, however important his position might be. We think that on the surface at least considerable honour was paid to the observance of this etiquette. It would, however, have been odd if there had not been a great deal of "lobbying."

During the interval between the death of a *reth* and the election of his successor and his initial establishment in Fashoda there is an awkward period in which the Shilluk feel a sense of potential danger. Custom requires that all *nyireths*, potential claimants to the throne, should remain at home. Should anyone among them wish to defy custom and try to obtain a following to instal himself in Fashoda, this is his chance. After the electoral college has agreed upon a new *reth* the chances of a pretender become much less, though the period of danger is never quite over till after the installation of the chosen *reth* by Nyikang in Fashoda. The danger from ambush, illness, or disaster attributed to the *reth* always exists.

The procedure for seizing the throne of Fashoda by force is as follows. A *nyireth* who is living in a section of the Shilluk, and who fancies his chances of becoming *reth*, persuades, or is persuaded by the chief of his settlement or section to start an insurrection; without the co-operation of the *nyireth* and his chief an insurrection is impos-

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
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643 sible, for only the settlement chief can call up the necessary force of warriors. Equally an insurrection must centre round a *nyireth*, for 669 only *nyireths* are eligible to become *reths*. (It is for this reason that [627] Shilluk custom enjoins upon all *nyireths* to remain quietly at home, as a safeguard, during an interregnum.) The procedure then varies with the fortunes of war. It seems probable that one settlement—there are some 100 settlements in the Shilluk country—would not of itself be able to start openly a campaign of violence. Should the electoral college fail to agree upon a single choice, then there would be a good chance of a pretender rallying half the kingdom to his cause, as Cuti Ajang succeeded in doing in 1917.

643 When the electoral college has settled upon a choice, the initial formalities take place very quietly, as if to avoid attracting attention. The new *reth* (who will not be *reth* in full sense till Nyikang has installed him) is brought by the chief of Gol Nyikang, traditionally after a mock duel, though we doubt whether this is obligatory. He is brought stealthily and by night, and at early dawn a bull is speared at Fashoda, and he is taken into the house favoured by his father in his life time in Fashoda, where he has to step over a sheep, held prostrate at the entrance to the house, and has a string of beads tied on to his ankle. The spearing of the bull and the tying on of the beads both symbolize his new status of what we may call *reth*-elect. We think the spearing of the bull is the more significant.

It is interesting that on this first day Anei was obviously under the stress of great emotion, natural in one who overnight, finds himself translated into the incarnation of the tribal hero, who is so closely descended from God.

631 Immediately on being introduced to Fashoda the *reth*-elect starts
643 to receive the homage, unofficially and without ceremony, of the chiefs of his kingdom. They come from all parts of the country, and for a chief to fail to come would be a sign of disaffection, or at best gross
643 discourtesy. The *reth's* brothers too all come, or should come, to
644 pay homage, and other *nyireths* as well. His brothers appear to bear

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944)1946
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him no malice, though his election has practically taken away their chances of becoming *reth* in future. All the same there remains potential danger to the new *reth*-elect from an angry or ambitious *nyireth* trying to ambush him by night. No armed rising is now likely, but an individual challenge remains a possibility for the *reth* till the end of his days.

The initial ceremonies are simple, and soon over. There remains an interval for the *reth*-elect, until he is installed by Nyikang. The funeral obsequies of his predecessor are largely arranged by others, though he has a say in fixing dates and procedure.

A final word may be said upon the part played by the intervention of government in this and previous elections. As explained above elections have taken place in 1903 and 1917 in the time of the present government, and before that there was a period of uncertainty, sometimes amounting to civil war during the Mahdia and "Turkia". There is what might be called a "traditional" tendency towards civil war at the time of the election of a *reth*, which is the customary way out of an impasse caused by the disagreement of the two "kingmakers". Since the advent of the present government steps have been taken to get the *reth* elected by peaceful means, in spite of the disagreement.

In 1903 the governor at Kodok himself presided at the election, and more or less dictated the choice of Fadiet as *reth* in place of Kur. Kur had appeared somewhat too oriental in his methods, and it was thought that Fadiet would be more amenable as a government nominee. This proved to be the case, but the fact that he was nominated by government made him of little political importance in the tribe.

In 1917 a disagreement between the king-makers threatened civil war, and the governor had to instal Fafiti and protect him by a detachment of troops. This again detracted from his importance as tribal head.

In 1943 the kingmakers reached agreement, and government

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
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643 to the mound of Fashoda, which is called Aturwic, and with it the shield and spears of Nyikang.

The *reth* was now in seclusion. No one but his most personal attendants might visit him. We were told that he would be stripped, bathed, and clothed in new robes during that afternoon. It was neither seemly nor possible to enquire too deeply into this part of the investiture, for it is conducted in strict secrecy. There is evidence that this ritual bathing takes place within the temporary camp Adul, because the smaller of the two huts is known as the "bathing room." Shilluk say that the *reth* is bathed alternately with hot and cold water, so that he shall not be subjected to extremes of temperature. It is a symbolic rite emphasizing his people's desire that he shall rule them with even temper throughout his reign. The fact is mentioned by [119] Munro in his account of Fafiti's installation (Note 18), and informants confirmed the tradition at the installation of *reth* Anei.

During the heat of the day the main crowds dispersed to their homes, but there were still large numbers of Shilluk sitting in and around Fashoda that evening. Most of these were relatives and friends of the inhabitants of the capital, who provided them with [273] refreshment, since the ban on drinking beer was lifted after the *reth*'s retirement. The Ororo and attendants of the *reth* were putting up [669] wind-screens round the *reth*'s camp, under which they would sleep that night to guard him from possible attack. The danger to the *reth*'s life was not yet over, a fact which repeatedly appeared from the care and attention of his guardians. The Shilluk describe this period of the ceremonies as "the *reth*'s camp *outside* Fashoda", and it was evident that he had not, in the eyes of the Shilluk, entered his capital. His final acceptance by Nyikang and by the Shilluk people still remained in doubt, though one of the most dangerous periods of his initiation from election to final installation had been successfully passed.

The same evening outside the shrine of Nyikang some of the

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944)1946
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Such was the atmosphere as Nyikang left for home after his thirtieth installation. 643 778

NOTES

1. The Great Divisions of the Shilluk Kingdom. The Shilluk kingdom is divided into two parts in two different ways. An archaic religious division into two "sees" called Gol Nyikang (south) and Gol Dhiang (north) seems only to be important on ceremonial occasions such as the installation of the *reth* or the rebuilding of Fashoda. Each "see" has one ceremonial chief. 631 616

Investigation has shown that these two "sees" are not coterminous with the two great temporal provinces of Gerr and Luak. The traditional boundary between Gerr (northern province) and Luak (southern province) is some 15 miles south of Fashoda between the sections of Both and Fathau. The sections from Both northwards to Yoiny are small sections composed of a succession of small villages, which the Shilluk liken to the beads of an ostrich eggshell necklace and call collectively Wirek (an ostrich eggshell necklace).

In the 19th. century there was opposition between Gerr and Luak over rival candidates for the *reth*ship, when the Turkish Government tried to get Ajang accepted as *reth*, and between Akol and Kur, Gerr supporting Ajang and Kur, and Luak supporting Kwikwon and Akol. 616 631 669 643

When the two great provinces mobilized against each other for civil war, for their organization is primarily military, the small sections of Wirek were overawed or defeated by the forces of Luak, though they should have mobilized with Gerr, and they turned traitor.

After *reth* Kur returned from Omdurman and defeated the forces of Akol (Luak and Wirek) and exiled Akol, the old boundary was restored, and Wirek returned once more to Gerr.

This is one of the few occasions when we diverge from Pumphrey's account of the Shilluk *S.N.R.* Vol. 24 p. 27 ("The Shilluk Tribe"). The distinction between the two sets of divisions becomes clearer when dealing with an occasion such as the installation of the *reth*. [114]

20: Thomson G-5 (1945-1946) 1948 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

643 was completely peaceful, and the people of the villages surrounding Fashoda were not much in evidence.

The method of summoning the new *reth* was interesting. Dak like other sons of Fadiet was not far away, and the chief of Gol Nyikang sent his son by night to get him. Whether or not there is a mock fight between the selected candidate and the messengers I do not know, but the traditional form of words announcing the choice was told to me. It is an interesting example of Shilluk "understatement" when talking [195] of the *reth* (c.f. Pumphrey *Sudan Notes & Records* Vol. XXIV, p. 44) — "You are our Dinka slave, we want to kill you" which means "You are our chosen *reth*, we want to instal you in Fashoda."

It was said that the installation of *reth* Anei had been hurried and many things had been forgotten. This was interesting in view of Anei's short tenure of office, which may have been due, in Shilluk eyes, to the omission of essential ceremonies connected with the installation. It was also said, and this was true, that Anei had hurried his installation through fear, in his anxiety to get it over. The new *reth* determined that in his case there should be nothing lacking and that the proper interval of time should be allowed to elapse. That this period is a time of ritual danger, as we suggested in the previous article, was frequently confirmed in 1946. The *reth* 643 became more and more worried as the installation approached. There 669 were rumours of rivals being harboured by important chiefs, and of preparations made for his assassination. They culminated in a strong rumour that a *nyimth* had declared his intention of assassinating the *reth* on the first day of the installation ceremonies. Mr. J. C. N. Donald, who followed the *reth's* party in their march to Fashoda on that day, confirmed the *reth's* nervousness. After the installation ceremonies were safely over, I asked the *reth* about this, suggesting that his apprehensions had been ill-founded, and he admitted, for the crisis was then over, that he had never had concrete evidence of any plot.

643 The actual preparations followed similar lines to those of 1944. It appeared that it was important that the ceremonies should take [821] place on a waxing moon, and in the event this delayed the installation for about three weeks. As the time approached, there was the same apprehension that Nyikang would not start from Akurwa.

[614] On 27.12.46 Nyikang and Dak arrived at Adodo Nyigir at sunset, carried by Kwanyikwom the second clan from [illegible] have this duty. They entered the village, as they had done in 1944, over the body of a black sheep, and after dancing round the village, they went into the same house. They had come, as before, after

20: Thomson G-5 (1945-1946) 1948 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

643 The next day December 30th, *Adal*, the temporary camp outside Fashoda, was built by Jago Yorieiker. This time he built both huts, and the chief of Gol Dhiang had no part.

On the 31st the *reth* and Nyikang were ready for the installation ceremonies. Nyikang and his army left Nyigir at about 9.00 a.m. and went straight to the village north of Fashoda, where they had to wait some two hours for the *reth* to start from Debalo. The army of Nyikang moved steadily this time and seldom turned back in countermarch as it had done in 1944. The *reth* was delayed ceremonially till about midday. His form of procession was similar to 1944, and the cattle which were bride-wealth for Nyakwer were observed being driven along beside his army.

There had been an abnormal White Nile flood in 1946, as in 1917 at the time of the installation of *reth* Fafiti, and the Khor Arepajur, which was dry in March 1944, was now an expanse of water about 80 yards wide. When the *reth* arrived at the khor, the *Golbainy* dragged the small black bull to the southern bank. The *reth*, taking Nyakwer by the hand, stepped over the bull and into a canoe. He was paddled across the khor with Nyakwer sitting behind him, while his followers forded the stream.

As the two parties of Nyikang and the *reth* approached each other Nyikang dashed forward and captured the *reth* without a struggle and began at once to carry him off to Cerlue (op. cit. p.p. 61 & 78) Fashoda. This corresponded with Munro's observation in 1918 (*Sudan Notes & Records* Vol. I), but not with what we had seen in 1944, when there had been a spectacular mock battle with millet stalks. I was told that they had "made a mistake" in 1944, and also that owing to the hardness of the millet stalks they were afraid of injuring someone. This latter reason had not cancelled the fight in 1944. There is another possible reason: the *reth* himself was living in a state of acute personal danger, owing, as he thought, to the likelihood of someone making an attack on his life. He may have issued orders at the last moment that the battle was not to take place, in case someone should take advantage of the confusion to attack him. This seems more possible because the *reth's* army were all carrying millet stalks as they crossed the khor, as if in preparation for the mock battle.

643 The rest of the ceremonies closely followed [illegible] On the stool was "possessed" by Nyikang, in the same way as *reth* Anri had been. He was afterwards led away to seclusion in *Adal* leading Nyakwer by the hand. An incident which may be of interest occurred while the *reth* was being led to *Adal*. The

I have assumed in the reader some knowledge of these accounts, for the observations which are recorded here are not part of a full and detailed description, but of a note intended to amplify previous records.

Although the spirit of Nyikang may appear almost anywhere in Shilluk country and in the numerous shrines which are found there, I think it is safe to assume that, where the new *reth* is concerned, Nyikang disappears at the time of the actual burial of the late *reth*. His spirit appears again in the effigy which is kept at Akurwa, the most important shrine in the country, and remains there pending the final ceremonies of the installation. Until the obsequies of his predecessor are completed, the *reth*-elect is not finally accepted, though he must follow the rules laid down by tradition and must avoid pollution. Theoretically, though this no longer holds true with the administration of the present government, his position may at any time be challenged by a rival and civil war might follow. After the old *reth* has been buried, though the danger from rivals is always present, he has to face the spirit of Nyikang and to undergo the trials to which Nyikang will subject him before he is accepted as a worthy successor and is himself possessed by the spirit. Actual physical danger from other claimants, the danger of an uprising against him, which is never entirely absent throughout his reign, is at its peak, but wanes as each stage is successfully passed. All this is expressed by the conventional attitudes displayed by him and his people and in the ordeals he must undergo. Thus, though there may be no real danger of armed conflict, the situation demands that these conventions be followed and throughout there is an atmosphere of insecurity.

We are here concerned with the election and installation of Kur *wad* Fadil. As the son of a *reth* who ruled the Shilluk for so long and so successfully[1] and coming immediately after two *reths* whose reigns were short and by no means universally popular, Kur was a likely candidate and it was generally accepted that one of the house of Fadil was the obvious choice. The Electoral College of chiefs sat at Fashoda immediately after the body of Dak *wad* Fadiet had been immured in the hut at Debwor. Mr. J. L. Baker, who was present, describes the procedure as follows:

"On the 13th May, 1951, the Electoral College sat without further delay as the chiefs wanted a new *reth* quickly owing to the approach of the rains. Also the issue was pretty clear from the outset as, apart from one or two chiefs in Goilwiny, the Shilluk were solidly in favour of *nyireth* Kur—a man known to me as a very well-behaved and dignified type, from Bapi behind Kodok. The College on this occasion was ten strong (no Tonga people had arrived, but this was not considered important). The following were:

1. *Jago* Yorkiher (Gol Dhiang)
2. *Jago* Thabo (Gol Nyikang)
3. *Iwanyireth* Cayo (*jang Iwareth*)[2]

[1] There were occasional conspiracies against Fadil, notably that of Nyawelo *wad* Kur in 1932. See Pumphrey, M. E. C., *The Shilluk Tribe*, S.N.R. Vol. 24 p. 3.

[2] *Jago jang Iwareth*, lit. "the chief of the chiefs of the *Iwareth*." The title was apparently given to this branch of the royal house by *reth* Nyakwac.

24: Howell E-5 (1951-1952) 1953 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

forth from the shrine and marched northwards to beat the bounds of Shilluk country in Muomo. The march on Fashoda then began. It is accepted custom among the Shilluk that Nyikang and his followers may seize cattle, sheep or goats which cross their path (most Shilluk are wise enough to keep them out of the way) or to demand them as offerings together with other smaller gifts from the occupants of the villages through which they pass. This licensed plundering, which is often abused beyond the bounds of piety by Nyikang's retinue, is treated by the Shilluk with admirable tolerance, for they must know that such offerings go to fill the stomachs and pockets of the *kwa* Nyikwoom. It is a sacred duty cheerfully accepted. At one point on the march at Moro, however, their demands were thought to be excessive and were resisted, a demonstration which nearly ended in armed conflict and which delayed the party for a while.* They had left Akurwa on the 28th January and reached Adodo, south of Kodok, on the 4th February, and the next day, in accordance with custom, the *reth* fled to Debolo.

As we have seen, it is traditional for the *reth* to remain three nights in Debolo. In fact, *reth* Kur had already made it known that he did not intend to spend more than one night there, on the grounds that his father, Fafiti, had spent no more. Fafiti's break with tradition had been dictated by the fear that he might be deprived of office or killed by a rival and the natural anxiety of the administrative authorities to get through the ceremonies as quickly as possible. In those days, the likelihood of civil war was much greater and Fafiti had been urged to cut the installation ceremonies to a minimum.* Precedents of this kind count heavily in subsequent customary procedure and in this and in previous installations it was noticeable that each *reth* was inclined to follow the procedure of his father, not that of his immediate successor.* This is at least one of the explanations of the variations in detail which are apparent when we compare the installation ceremonies of those *reths* of the Shilluk of which records exist.

Reth Kur's decision to remain only one night at Debolo had two main effects. In the first place, fewer of those who seek absolution for the sins of the flesh (notably the seduction of unmarried girls) were able to attend, though I am told that about fifty persons presented themselves to the *reth* for this

* It appears that the effigy of Nyikang was damaged in the affray and had to be taken back to Akurwa for repairs.

* Mr. Udal writes: "When I visited the *reth* on the 26th January, he announced his intention of spending three nights at Debolo. However, when on the 2nd February there was still no definite news of the whereabouts of Nyikang, he did not attempt to disguise his irritation at the dilatoriness of the *kwa* Nyikwoom and said he might leave after the ceremonies [illegible]. In the event, [illegible] Nyikang's arrival at Adodo on the evening of the 4th February had reached Fashoda, *reth* Kur and Fafiti set out before sunrise for Debolo and it was arranged between the messengers of the *reth* and Nyikang that the rastic should take place on the morning of the 6th February." *Reth* Kur's impatience may have been genuine, but I do not think he would have attempted to alter established customs if he had not the precedent of his father before him.

* For example, see Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

643 When the Reth's army begins to move out to meet Nyikango's, all the people of Debulo run away clapping the handles of their spears, meaning that the Reth will never return to Debulo until he dies. As he goes out a bull is laid down on his path, whereupon he walks over it in front of the procession, pulling another bull by the tail. The latter is covered with white cloths and is meant to reach Fashoda, being dragged in this manner—Fashoda is about two and a half miles from Debulo. The spear from the shrine at Bol and another from Lul are also brought for the coronation ceremony.

Now scouts are sent to see if Nyikango's army is approaching and to report the news back to the Reth. In the Reth's army the people carry some dura stalks representing spears with which they fight with the army of Nyikango by throwing them. The members of Nyikango's army carry long thongs of twisted grass which they use as whips to disperse the Reth's army, so that they will leave the Reth in [753 828] their hands to be taken by the spirit of Nyikango. The whips are filled with the spirit and the people are frightened by them, as being touched by the whip is enough to produce madness unless gifts are offered to Nyikango's people. Princes are not [644 allowed to go near the Reth during the procession, because if the Reth is killed by 664] any of them during the coronation procession from Debulo to Fashoda the coronation is not postponed, but the people at once seize a nearby Prince, or the prince who killed him, to replace the slain Nyireth—he is not yet Reth, as he has not been possessed by the spirit of Nyikango—and the coronation continues. Because of this danger during the procession the Reth has to be protected by his policemen and the senior chiefs, who keep the ordinary people away from him.

According to the custom, when the Reth's army reaches the dry khor called Archujur near Fashoda, which is the boundary between the two parties, a black bull is laid down. The Reth boldly walks over the bull and across to the other side to meet the party of Nyikango. As soon as they come near each other the two armies begin to fight, throwing dura stalks at each other. At that moment the Reth is seized from his army by the people of Nyikango and clothed with the spirit of Nyikango. Here Nyikango's army are busy sending people away with their whips so as to leave the Reth with the group of performers of the ceremony. After this he is taken to a round cleared place and circulated four times there before entering Fashoda. As this is [644 done he is escorted to Fashoda by two holy maidens with the image of Nyikango on his shoulder. These two maidens are taken from the performers of the coronation and later become wives to the new Reth.

In Fashoda he is taken in front of the Nyikango's shrine and placed on a silver coronation seat covered with white cloths, and the image of Nyikango and Duk are held over him in order that he might be possessed of their powers. With him are his sub-chief and the chief of Kwanyiyek holding the legs of the Reth as he is sitting on the seat. He remains in an open place for some time, with the group holding some [775 white cloths as a shelter around him. Meanwhile Nyikango's army beat their drums and sing Nyikango's songs. Here the Reth is said to be shaken by the power of

643 After the performance of this, the Reth and his sub-chief are taken to one of 233 the roughly-made huts near Nyikango's shrine, where they stay for two days, with the Reth keeping the little herd of Nyikango's cattle which was brought from Debulo. This kind of action is done so as to obtain good fortune in the future during his kingship. Here he is treated as he was in Debulo, being made to do the work of a small boy, making fires for these cows and cleaning their place. This work is done

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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by the Egyptian rulers of the country during the nineteenth century, but it was never accepted by the Shilluk. 643 648

One of the first steps taken by the new government towards the settlement of the Shilluk was the deposing and exiling of the king, Kur, whose conception of the royal duties and prerogatives boded ill for the health and well-being of such of his subjects as chanced to cross him in his wrath or thwart him in his desires. Hitherto many a Shilluk Urias or Naboth whose comely wife or humble possessions had aroused envy in the royal breast, had paid for it with his life. The tribal history even recounts that one king killed his wife because she could spit further than he could! With the removal of Kur, however, there went too the King's arbitrary power of life and death over his subjects, and although the government of the country and the administration of justice was still largely left in the hands of the king and his chiefs, it was henceforward to be administered under the eye of the local British officials. [103]

The powerful position and the respect which a Shilluk king enjoys are not, however, without their price. The saying that 'Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown' may be trite, but it is true; with the pomp and circumstance of the royal state go the cares and worries of government which have undoubtedly caused monarchs many a sleepless night. But although the burden of their office may have been accepted as the price to be paid for its power and glory, and although too there are numerous instances in history of the wearer of the royal diadem dying at the hands of the assassin or the public executioner, still it is not the generally accepted thing that he must thus inevitably perish, and that to assume the purple is in effect to give his [illegible], upon the physical and mental fitness of the king is deemed to depend the well-being of the whole people, and any weakening of his bodily powers or impairing of his mental faculties means that he must be put out of the way, so that the country may flourish under a more lusty and vigorous ruler. Moreover, it is the recognised right of any potential [669] 643 682

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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643 682 669 king, that is, the son of a former king, to attempt to kill the reigning king and seize the power for himself. The king is, as it were, considered fair game for anyone who, provided he has the requisite credentials, considers himself strong enough singlehandedly to take the life and the title of his lord.

Uneasy then, indeed, is the head which wears the Shilluk crown, for the owner may wake to feel throttling fingers encircling his throat, or heavy folds of cloth muffling his face, or, should he have any reason to think that a pretender seeks his throne, may spend night after night in unwinking vigil, divested of clothes and ornaments which might betray his presence or movements, carrying a blackened spear, prowling ceaselessly around his own village, pausing where the shadows are darkest, magnifying each noise of the night and interpreting it as the stealthy approach of a marauder intent upon his life. I must confess that I have never heard of an attempt being made upon the life of the king by a would-be usurper in recent years, but it would appear that the possibility is always present, and it seems that an attempt to assassinate King Papiti was made about 1930 by a son of the deposed king, Kur. During the past ten years three Shilluk kings have died, and although there is no certainty that any one of them was violently 'assisted' to die, there is equally no certainty that he was not.

643 731 [775] Once the king is dead, either from natural causes or otherwise, a great disquietude and uneasiness settles on the country. Officially 'the land has ceased to be'; the spirit of Nyikang has lost its dwelling place and the country and the people have temporarily lost their protector. All manner of evils may fall on them: famine, pestilence, invasion, and—during the interregnum—civil war may break out should any one of the nyireth who has a sufficiently strong following make a bid to seize the throne for himself. Hence, after the death of a king, the election of his successor is proceeded with as quickly as possible, but it is only with his inauguration, about a year afterwards, that the shadow of disaster is lifted and the land may be said to live again.

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766 535 at length the drums cease to throb, the last of the animals are sacrificed and the meat distributed to the dancers and the people disperse to their homes. The king is dead. . . .

643 666 [642] [669] The country has not, however, remained without a king all this time. The period of interregnum is one of disquiet, and there is always the real fear that one of the nyireth may make a bid for the throne. As soon as possible, then, after the king's death, within a few days in fact, the electorate council meets to choose the new king. This council is made up of eleven chiefs of the Colo, the descendants of the original companions of Nyikang, and three members of the royal houses.

[175] [631] When Nyikang first settled the country he divided it into eleven major districts, appointing a chief to each. These chiefs were all Colo since, as Nyikang was the first Reth, the Kwareth had not then come into being. These eleven chiefs form the board of electors, and with them sit three of the [614] Kwareth, one from each of the three royal houses, those of Papiti, Fadiet and Yor, whose sons are eligible for the kingship. Among these three families there may be as many as forty or fifty nyireth, entitled as such to consideration for the vacant throne. It is generally accepted, however, though not a hard and fast rule, that the three royal families should provide a king in rotation, and it is certainly understood that the family of the late king is automatically ruled out. Attention is therefore concentrated on the claims of the candidates from the other two houses, with the weight of opinion in favour of that one which has the more remotely provided a king. Many of the nyireth are eliminated at once weakness of character, etc., and the merits and demerits of the rest are given serious consideration, until the number is reduced to half a dozen or less from among whom the final choice is made. How selection is finally made is the secret of the council. Sometimes the late king may have 'adopted' a certain nyireth, and thus indicated his wish in the matter of his successor. Such an indication does not mean that the king's protégé will certainly be chosen but it will have great

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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weight in the deliberations of the electorate. Sometimes, too, when the final choice is a difficult one, it would seem that the selectors have recourse to augury and divination. A number of small stones, one for each candidate, is placed in a fierce fire. A stone that glows red indicates that, under the prince it represents, cattle will be plentiful in the country; a white-hot stone would presage an abundance of grain in the new rule; one glowing both white and red would entail an era of plenty both in cattle and grain, whilst that which merely blackens and bursts would unanimously be rejected.

When the decision is at last reached, one of the great chiefs goes unobtrusively and by night to the village where the king-elect is living. During the deliberations of the electorate all nyireths are required to remain in their own homes and not to approach the neighbourhood of Fashoda; this precaution is taken to ensure that no nyireth should rush the capital and usurp the power for himself. The chief challenges the nyireth to a mock battle and when he has thus given a token of his prowess and valour the news of his election is formally broken to him. He is brought quietly, again under cover of night, to Fashoda, and at daybreak inducted with ceremony into his capital. When these preliminaries are over and the reth-elect is settled in Fashoda, the news of his election is noised abroad, and chiefs and nyireths come in from all parts of the country to pay their respects to their new king. The situation has become somewhat easier now, since with the accomplished fact, there is little likelihood of an armed insurrection taking place. There is always of course the possibility of any nyireth asserting his right to the throne and proving it by slaying the king in single combat, and in former days it was customary for the king to slaughter a [illegible] effective method of reducing the potential danger to himself.

The period between the election and the solemn installation of the king is roughly a year. During this time the land is, as it were, dead, for the spirit of Nyikang still lacks its habitual abode, and is under interdict. No great public dances may be held, except the funeral dances for the late

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born there is brought up in that village under the tutelage of the chief. If the child is a boy he is brought up in much the same manner as other boys of the village but it is not forgotten that he is a Nyireth, and consequently a potential king. He is given a herd of cattle, and on reaching manhood is expected to found his own village, also at a distance from Fashoda, for the fear of assassination is always present to the reth, and hence it is ever the royal policy to keep all the princes as far distant from Fashoda as possible.

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Marriage is an important affair, not only for those directly concerned, but for the whole community, for among the Shilluk it has many economic implications arising chiefly from the condition of the dowry or bride-price, almost universal throughout Africa. When the Shilluk youth, decorated in his best, goes a-wooing, if the lady of his choice accepts the heart and fortune which he casts at her feet and coyly says yes, she is sure to say that he must 'see father first'. I presume that an English youth in similar happy circumstances would address his prospective father-in-law thus: 'Sir, I wish to marry your daughter. She has done me the honour of promising to be my wife,' and with a brief discussion of present security and future prospects, the matter would be quickly settled. Not so does the Shilluk bridegroom-to-be approach his future in-laws; he does not appear in person, but sends one or two friends to negotiate the marriage for him. Nor must the ambassador come empty-handed, but must bring the traditional gifts as befitting the occasion; spears, hoes, tobacco and firewood for the father and mother of the girl and, as the negotiations proceed, upwards of seven sheep which become the property of her brother or cousins, and finally, and most important of all, the cattle.

The bride-price of ten or more head of cattle is an essential condition for every Shilluk marriage. It may be paid in instalments and indeed generally is, and its payment usually extends over several years, but there can can be no question of the young couple living together as husband and wife